

6
UNITY RECOMMENDED,

IN A

693. f. 11
6
SERMON

On EPHESIANS, Chap. iv. Ver. 3.

Preached before the

RELIGIOUS SOCIETIES

In and about LONDON,

At their Annual Meeting, in the Parish Church of *St. Mary-Le-Bow*,

On *EASTER-MONDAY*, 1759.

To which is added,

An APPENDIX,

Giving an Account of the Original Design, General Rules, and present
State of the *Religious Societies*.

Published at the Request of the *Societies*.

By *WILLIAM DODD*, M. A.

L O N D O N :

Printed for L. DAVIS and C. REYMERS in Holbourn.

AND

W. FADEN in Wine Office-Court, Fleet-Street.

PROPERTY RECOMMENDED

OF THE

RELIGIOUS SOCIETIES

At their Annual Meeting, in the Town Church of St. Mary, London.



As a P. D. I. X.

State of the

Published at the Request of the Society

BY WILLIAM BODD, M.A.

LONDON:

Printed by J. G. Smith, at the Office of the Society

W. Smith, in the Office of the Society

T O T H E

TWELVE STEWARDS of the *Religious Societies*.

GENTLEMEN,

AS I was a Stranger to the state of the *Religious Societies*, when you requested me to preach your annual Sermon, I made it my business to gain the best Information I could, as well from yourselves as others, that I might address myself to them with the greater propriety.

The intelligence I received from you soon determined my Subject; and it gave me pleasure to find my choice so well approved, and so satisfactory as well to yourselves, as to the worthy Clergymen and others, who favoured me with their attention:

But I was in hopes my business had ended there; this however could not be allowed. Your earnest Desire to have the Sermon made public, and the repeated requests of many, (who were pleased to signify, that they thought the *Distinctions*, made in it, might be of general Utility) could not be resisted, either by my wishes to avoid the trouble, or by my apprehensions of the Calumny which might reasonably be expected, on the publication of such a Discourse.

Should this be the consequence, I must make my appeal to you; though I may be permitted to say, that I am the less solicitous on that head, not only through the consciousness of my sincere intentions, but as the Sermon hath passed the accurate inspection, and been favoured with the approbation of some of the Clergy especially: whose Names, were I allowed to mention them, would be my sufficient Defence against all the poison of Obloquy, and all the Darts of Censure: which, when they fly concealed in the darkness of *anonymous* attacks, will always meet that neglect they so justly deserve. The gallant enemy boldly fights on fair ground and in open day; the Murderer and Assassin only stab in the night.

Some of my worthy Brethren have express'd their desire, that I "would enlarge, in a *Preface*, more fully on the proper and distinguishing criterion between those who *are*, and *are* call'd *Methodists*, and those who *may be so call'd*, but *are not* really such; who are sincere and intelligent Believers, and might more properly be called *Anti-methodists*." But I apprehend there is no further need, after what I have said in the Sermon; which I hope will be found sufficient; if not, any future occasion offered to enlarge on this head, shall not be passed over.

The

The cry of *Methodism* is frequently raised by such as are totally ignorant of the nature of the accusation; and many are stigmatized with the *Name*, who are perfectly innocent of the *Thing*. The observations made in the following Discourse may possibly serve to settle the point in some Degree; or at least to stop the Tongues of those, who very unjustly cast the aspersions, where there is not the least cause. And it deserves, perhaps, to be considered, by all serious and sincere *Protestants*, whether the affixing the Charge of *Methodism*, &c. indiscriminately upon men of unblameable Lives, and irreproachable Conversation, may not tend greatly to prejudice our holy Faith in general, and to bring a reproach upon Christianity itself, through the *pretended* offence of Methodism: this may be a triumph to the *Deist* and *Papist*, equally pleasing. And if so, can we be too accurate in our Distinctions, or too cautious in our Imputations?—remembering, that while we confound *Christianity* and *Methodism*, we are doing discredit to the former, in the same proportion, that we are giving weight and dignity to the latter.

For myself, I have the satisfaction to declare, that the sentiments of the present Sermon are those which I have publicly profess'd, ever since I had the happiness to preach in this City, however, in some respects, they may have been misrepresented or misunderstood; * and therefore, while the Discourse may be of advantage to others, it will serve to set forth and to vindicate the Opinions of,

GENTLEMEN,

Your much Obliged

And sincere Friend,

WILLIAM DODD.

PLASTOW, Nov. 3,
1759.

* An instance of this I have at present before me, in a performance lately published by the Rev. Mr. Downes, call'd *Methodism examined and exposed*. In which he is pleased to go somewhat out of his way to drag in a passage from a Sermon of mine: and, little heedful of the Reputation of his Brother, has thought fit to lay to my charge some obnoxious expressions from, and to make me the Author of, a Pamphlet, which he calls "a weak and scurrilous one;" tho' I do solemnly and publicly declare, that I never so much as heard of that Pamphlet before. See p. 95, 96. of Mr. Downes's *Methodism*, &c.

EPHESIANS IV. 3.

— ENDEAVOURING TO KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT
IN THE BOND OF PEACE.

THOUGH there is nothing more certain, than that the Christian Religion is calculated, above all other institutions, to promote universal peace, harmony, and concord; yet it is melancholy to observe, how much these good ends have been frustrated in almost every age, through the pride and prejudice, the folly and ignorance, the wickedness and depravity of mankind. Overlooking the main design, and inattentive to the principal view of this divine institution, Men have made it, as it were, a stage, whereon to fight their unhallowed Combats: And scarce any undertaking, however weak, worldly, and wicked, but hath been sanctified with the venerable pretext of a Zeal for Christ's Religion.

This mischief was early introduced; and hath been widely diffused: Our Nation hath experienced its pernicious effects; nor is the Evil by any means removed from amongst us: the Necessity of caution against it cannot therefore of consequence be removed.——And as the present *Religious Societies* were originally instituted * with a design to preserve the *Union* and support the *Honour* of the Church of *England*, I know not how I can more properly discharge the office appointed me, than by laying before you, the great Importance and true Nature of that *Unity*, which is so commendable and useful in all, so essentially requisite in the Christian Communion: and a due regard for which, will be our best preservative against unsettled Opinions, and irregular practice. This then I will endeavour to do,

- I. By reading to you some of those passages in the sacred Scripture, which recommend and inforce this Duty.
- II. By explaining its true Nature, and suggesting the best Method to preserve it; which will necessarily lead me to consider the Propriety and Usefulness of these *Societies* to that end. This with an Address,
 1. To such as are *Members* of the Societies, and 2. to such as are not,will sufficiently employ the present Discourse.

I. I am to lay before you, some of those passages in Sacred Scripture, which speak of and recommend Christian Unity:

* See the Appendix to this *Sermon*.

Amongst which there are none, that claim greater attention than those connected with the words of my Text: St. Paul in the beginning of the Chapter presseth the *Ephesians* to a discharge of such Duties as immediately tend to unity, in very affectionate Terms. *I therefore the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that you walk worthy of the vocation where with ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in Love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling: One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.* He then proceeds to speak of the different administrations, offices, and gifts in this one Body; which rightly used, all tend to its Edification; and are given of God, *for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect Man, unto the Measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of Doctrine, by the slight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive: but speaking the truth in Love, may grow up into him in all things, who is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the Body, unto the edifying of itself in Love.*

In like manner, in his Epistle to the *Romans*, he compares the Union of Christians with Christ, and with each other to the union of the head and members in the Body natural. *As we have many Members in one Body, and all Members have not the same office: so we being many are one body in Christ, and every one Members one of another.* And again in his first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, *As the body is one, and hath many Members, and all the Members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free: and have been all made to drink into one spirit. For the Body is not one Member but many.—Now ye are the body of Christ, and Members in particular.* Again,—*The bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of Christ? For we being many are one Bread and one Body: for, we are all partakers of that one Bread.*

Very perfect is the Idea which we may have of this blessed Unity from that description of the Church of Christ, which we read in the second and in the fourth Chapters of the *Acts*. There we are told; *they that gladly receiv'd Peter's word, were baptized, and the same Day, there was added unto them about three thousand souls: and they continued steadfastly in the Apostles Doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of Bread, and in Prayers.—They had all things in common:—and continuing daily with one accord in the Temple,*
and

and breaking Bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of Heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. Again, the Multitude of them that believed, were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them, that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

Of such a society one might well say with David, *Behold how good and how joyful a thing it is, Brethren, to dwell together in Unity. It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down unto the beard, even upon Aaron's beard, and went down to the skirts of his cloathing.* And of so great consequence, was it thought, to preserve this Unity, that upon a survey of the Scriptures, you will find innumerable passages exhorting to it, and to have Peace one with another; as well as dissuading from every thing, which might tend to destroy it. Amongst these the words of St. Paul at the Conclusion of his Epistle to the Romans much merit our regard. Now I beseech you Brethren, mark them which cause Divisions and Offences, contrary to the Doctrine, which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; [their own carnal lusts, interests, and appetites] * and by good words and fair speeches, deceive the hearts of the simple, of the unwary, sincere, and honest-hearted. And in the fifteenth Chapter, nothing can be more affectionate than his Address: *Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one towards another, according to Christ Jesus: that ye may with one mind and one mouth, glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

These passages, (to which many more might be added, if need were) are sufficient to shew you the great importance of Christian Unity; and the danger that may attend a breach of it †: And indeed the first and best Christians held it so important to preserve, so dangerous to dissolve this sacred Bond, that many of them chose to forego the greatest advantages, to suffer the greatest losses and inconveniences, rather than infringe the inviolable Unity of the Church of Christ.—Happy had it been for the Christian World, if their meek and modest Spirit had more diffused its pleasing influence; if their commendable Examples had animated more to a laudable imitation.—And this we shall fully see by considering in the next place, the true Nature of this Unity.

II. There is no Argument which the *Roman Catholics* are more fond of pressing in their own Favour, than what they call the “Unity of the Church.” The Church of Christ, say they, is but one. In this we are agreed with them. Out of that Church, say they, there is no Salvation.

* See Doddridge's Paraphrase. † See Bishop Burnet's four Discourses to the Clergy of the Diocese of Sarum. Discourse IV. p. 268, 299, &c.

Here again we are agreed *. The *Romish* church, say they, is that one, only true, holy and Catholic Church. Here we are absolutely divided; for tho' we may grant that church to be a *Member* of the Church *universal*, yet, we by no Means allow it to be the *universal Church*.

The holy, *Catholic*, or universal Church of Christ,* in which we profess, in our Creeds, to believe, is "the whole Multitude of those persons, who embrace and profess the Christian Religion, and are joined together, by the means of the Sacraments rightly and duly administer'd, in one Body or Society under one Head Jesus Christ, through the influence of one and the same Holy Spirit." This is what we mean, when we speak of the *Catholic Church*. But when we speak of a Church of any particular Denomination, as the *Greek*, the *Æthiopic*, the Church of *England*, we mean only some particular church, which is but a branch of the Church universal. The *Catholic Church* is and can be but *one*; because all the Christians in the world belong to it; and this is the Church wherein we profess to believe. But particular churches are many, as many as the Nations are that own and profess the Christian Faith. Yet all these Churches are but parts of the universal Church, just as our several Limbs and Members are parts of our Body †.

From this true Notion of the Church of Christ, you may easily discern

* I desire to be understood here in the same sense with our own Church, when she saith in the Catechism, that "the Sacraments are generally necessary to Salvation." God forbid that we should take upon us to exclude any from all possibility of Salvation; or to determine ought respecting any of *those*, who, through *invincible* ignorance or prejudice, are not actually admitted into the *visible* Church of Christ, nor made covenanted Members thereof. We leave them to the merciful God, in whose hands they are, and speak here only of the Church in general, and of its visible Members: for though we are assured that there is no Salvation but in Jesus Christ, (See *Acts*, iv. 12.) yet we must not pretend to say, how far the benefits of his universal Redemption may extend.—In what follows too, be it observed, that we speak only of the *visible* or militant Church of Christ, not the *invisible* or Church *triumphant*. Two or three Definitions of the former are added from others; from whence the Reader may draw his own conclusions: my own are freely delivered above.—In the 9th Article of the Church of *England* we read, "The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful Men, in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly ministered, according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things, that of necessity is requisite to the same." Dr. *Watts* saith, "The whole visible Church of Christ upon Earth consists of all those persons in the World that make a visible and credible profession of the Christian Religion, however scattered through all Nations, and whether joined together by mutual agreement in particular societies or not." See his Works, Vol. VI. 4to. p. 42. Dr. *Hammond*, in his Catechism, defines the Church "to be a Society of Believers, ruled and continued according to the appointed ordinances, with the use of the Sacraments, preaching of the Word, Censures, &c. under Bishops, or Pastors succeeding those on whom the Holy Ghost came down; and (by receiving ordination of those that had that power before them, *i. e.* of the bishops of the Church, the continued successors of the Apostles) lawfully called to those offices." Pract. Catech. p. 346. See also the learned *Pearson* on the 9th Article of the Creed.

† The sum of this paragraph is from Archbishop *Sharp's* Sermons, Vol. VII. Sermon 5. whose Name will ever be dear, and his Writings highly valued by every Protestant, and every sincere Member of the Church of England.

the *Nature* of that Unity, which every Member of it is required to maintain. The Church Catholic is one Body, professing the same apostolic Faith, and united under one Head, by one Spirit, communicated through the Means of the same Sacraments, administered by Pastors lawfully ordained and appointed thereto. Agreeably to what St. Paul saith, *There is one Body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one Hope of your calling: one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism; [the Communion of one Bread;] and one God and Father of all.*

But, though we grant every Church, which corresponds to the Definition above-given, to be a true and living Member of the Church universal, yet it is very possible, there may be a much greater Degree of Purity in some than in others: * much less mixture of human Imposition and human Defect; much nearer approaches to the Degree of primitive perfection. On which account it behoves every rational and thinking Christian seriously to enquire after, and unite himself to, that Church which hath the best Evidences of sound Doctrine and just Discipline. While at the same time, as a Member of the *civil Society*, he seems bound in Duty to that Society, and to the good order of it, to join in communion with the Church, which the Government by law establisheth; in case he finds nothing in such a Church, destructive of the foundations of Unity †. For you observe, that as to the external administration of Churches, their several Ceremonies and Modes of worship, nothing is determined in scripture, neither is any particular form enjoined, as essentially necessary to Unity. The only rule is, *Let all things be done decently and in order.* The Conduct of these matters depends upon the wisdom of the Directors, and the nature of the Government. And when they are established, by the best rules of human prudence, every intelligent Member of the *civil Society*, in order to keep up *its* Unity, would act rationally and religiously, by conforming to the ecclesiastical Establishment, and so preserving the Unity both of Church and State.

Now, in the Church of *England*, all the particulars necessary to constitute a true and living Member of the Church universal are found. We are, therein, united to one Head, Christ Jesus our Lord, by one Spirit communicated to us in Baptism, and confirm'd in the Lord's Supper: therein we profess the faith of the Apostles, and enjoy the administration of the Word and Sacraments under lawful Pastors and Governors, duly ordained and appointed thereto. And of consequence may rest perfectly assured of Salvation in the Communion of this Church, if we perform our part, and labour to *keep up the Unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace.* Nor can there be any necessity for being *carried about with every blast of Doctrine*, and shifting from side to side; much less for uniting ourselves to those, who break the

* See *Bingham's Antiquities*, Vol. II. p. 367. and Vol. VII. p. 1, &c.

† See *Bishop Burnet's Discourse* referred to above; and also *Archbishop Sharp's Discourse concerning Conscience*, in the second Volume of his Sermons, p. 225.

Unity of that Church; setting up, under a specious pretence of more elevated piety, a new Form and Discipline of their own, and allowing and countenancing Teachers, who are commissioned neither by God nor man; from whom, of necessity, no spiritual supplies can be expected or derived *.

You may easily perceive, that, in order to keep up the Unity of the Church in general, as well as of that wherewith you hold Communion,—your first care must be to become a true Member of Christ, by a sincere discharge of your baptismal vow, and by a renewal and ratification of your Covenant with God at the holy *Eucharist*. This done, by your regular attendance on the Ministrations of your lawful Pastors, and in the exercise of Piety and Charity, you must testify the sincerity of your vows, and the reality of your faith; which you should endeavour to settle, to the utmost of your power, on the sure foundations of the sacred Scriptures; and to these I am persuaded you will find the faith of the Church of *England* exactly conformable †. An attention hereto will be the best Method to secure you from all the arts and cunning craftiness of Deceivers. “Admit nothing as an article of faith *essential*, which you do not find plainly taught in the Word of God, and held, as such, by your own Church.” This principle, had it been steadily pursued, would have prevented innumerable Evils, and the shipwreck of many souls; who not distinguishing between Articles of Faith which are *fundamental*,

* It is strange to observe such men labouring to prove they are not *Separatists* or *Schismatics*; urging that they are true Friends to the Church of England, and have never broke its unity. Their reasoning is much of a piece with that of the Brethren of the Society of *Jesus*. See *Post-cath's* incomparable *Provincial Letters*. And surely it is surprizing to read, “*Reasons against a Separation from the Church of England, offered by the Rev. Mr. John Wesley to the Methodist Preachers*,” which are to be found at the close of a book, lately published by that Gentleman, called, “*A Preservative against unsettled Notions in Religion*.”

† I cannot refuse my Reader the satisfaction of Archbishop *Bramhall's* judgment in this case, who, “In the greatest Maturity of his judgment, and integrity of his conscience, when most redeemed from juvenile fervors, popular fallacies, vulgar partialities, and secular flatteries, declared, to the present age and posterity, that since he was capable to move in so serious a search and weighty a disquisition, as that of Religion is; as his greatest design was, through God's grace, to find out and persevere in such a profession of Christian Religion as hath most of truth and order, of power and peace, of holiness and solemnity, of divine verity and catholic antiquity, of true charity and holy constancy; so he could not (apart from all prejudices and prepossessions) find, in any other Church, or church way, antient or modern, either more of the good he desired, or less of the evil he would avoid, than he had a long time discerned and, upona strict scrutiny, more and more observed in the frame and form, in the constitution and settled Dispensation of the *Church of England*. No where diviner mysteries, no where sounder Doctrines, holier morals, warmer devotions, apter rituals, or comlier ceremonies. All which together, by a meet and happy concurrence of piety and prudence, brought forth such spirituals and graces, both in their habits, exercises and comforts, as are the life and soul, and seal of true religion; those more immediate and special influences of God's holy Spirit upon the Soul, those joint operations of the Blessed Trinity, for the justification, sanctification, and salvation of a Sinner.” See *Bramhall's Works*. *Dubl. Edit.*

and those which are not, have been led into a wilderness of error and perplexity, to the very great confusion of themselves and others.

This distinction merits your careful Notice; for it is but too true, that very many of the differences in the Christian religion have arisen from not duly attending to it, or at least from Articles not fundamental. Dean *Sherlock* has well observed, that "a fundamental Doctrine is such a one, as is of so essential necessity to the Christian covenant, that without it the whole building and superstructure must fall." † Now the Christian Covenant implies, 1. A Founder or principal Covenanter. 2. A Subject capable of being covenanted with. 3. A Charter of Foundation. 4. A Mediator. 5. Conditions to be performed. 6. Aids or Means to enable to Performance. 7. Sanctions to bind the Covenant and to secure Obedience. So that the Doctrines—of the ever blessed Trinity, the Founder and principal Covenanter;—of Man's Endowment with freedom of will, so far forth as to denominate him a moral Agent;—of the divine authority of the Scriptures;—of the Atonement and Satisfaction made by Christ;—of Faith, Repentance, and a holy Life;—of the Sacraments and the Assistance of the holy Spirit, thereby communicated;—and of future Rewards and Punishments, are *fundamental* Doctrines of Christianity *.

As on the one hand we must never give up these, so on the other we should be extremely careful not to enlarge the Number of fundamental Doctrines; or rather not to hold and press such, as fundamental and essentially necessary to Salvation, which really are not such: for much is the prejudice that may arise from hence, much is the prejudice that hath, that doth arise from this method of proceeding. Were we happily to agree in these fundamental Doctrines, this would, above all things, promote that Christian Love, that spirit of forbearance, that candour and charity, which is no less amiable than important; as an exercise for which some men, perhaps, are permitted to be more than ordinarily attached to private and peculiar opinions. With regard to these, we should, as some one expresses it, "Agree to disagree." All Men will never be exactly of the same Sentiments; but while we hold the Doctrines fundamental, however we may dissent in lesser Matters, or possibly in the Manner of explaining even greater †, this ought never to break the *Unity* of the Spirit, nor destroy that Love which is the bond of peace. And though some who embrace

and

† See *Sherlock's* Vindication of the Def. of *Stillingfleet*, p. 256.

* The Reader is referred, for a fuller explanation of what follows than could possibly be given here, to the learned Dr. *Waterland's* Discourse on *Fundamentals*. See also Dr. *Watts's* Works, Vol. VI, p. 61. Quest. 7. which is worth the Reader's attention.

† The Knowledge of Man is so contracted, and his ignorance of spiritual Beings, their modes of existence, and manner of operation so profound, that it is surprising to observe such a multiplicity

and advance Doctrines as fundamental, which appear not to be such, may chance to be bitter against those who cannot agree with them; yet Men of a moderate Spirit, while they take care properly to express their disapprobation of such Tenets, should not be wanting in that Love, which is the characteristic Ornament of their Religion. And it may be proper to observe, that in expressing our own Dissent, as well as in guarding others from dangerous and erroneous opinions †, there is no more want of true Love, than in avowing our disapprobation of Vice, than in warning our friends from pestilence and poison.

Such is the Spirit of our excellent Church, such is the Spirit which she recommends to all her Members; a Spirit which, doubtless, is one great cause of that general Esteem wherein she hath ever been held by all who dissent from her: it being observable, that every Order and Party of Christians commend,—next after their own,—*the Church of England*.

To promote and preserve the Unity and Honour of this Church was the original purpose of the *Religious Societies*; and they seem well calculated to serve these good Ends. They were, in the beginning, instituted with an especial View to the Inroads of *Popery*, as well as of every other evil Spirit, which would either destroy or divide the Church of *England*. Their Utility then cannot but be evident at present, when *Popery* makes, though not such bold and open, yet large advances; and when Deism and Infidelity on one hand, Ignorance and Enthusiasm on the other, certain introducers and harbingers of popery of the worst sort, so manifestly spread and prevail more and more amongst us. And as the zealous Patrons of these Causes find, that the best Method to strengthen their Interests, and unite their Party, is to join in societies, and hold their several conferences, shall it not stir up the serious and thinking Members of our Church, to follow the same measures, for a far better end, with a much better design, namely, to encourage and

plicity of Disputes respecting them: would we duly consider the reach of our present faculties, we should contentedly acquiesce in an humble belief of those divine Truths, which are the immediate Discoveries of *Revelation*, and which *perfectly to comprehend*, would not be, to *believe*. Every thing respecting our Duty is plainly laid down; such things, as in our present state we could not penetrate, are delivered as matters of faith; we should therefore drop all disputes concerning them, and be as careful as possible how we presume to *explain* them: for it is evident, that when we attempt to enter into the *Mode* of the Divine Existence, the manner of the Blessed Spirit's operations, the consistency of Grace and Free-will, Foreknowledge, &c. and other points of the like Nature, we are presently lost in a Labyrinth without a clue, and in the Darkness of our contracted Sight, may wander and wander, and never be nearer the End.

† Nay, this is the immediate Duty of the Clergy, who, at their Ordination, have promised
 “to be ready, with all faithful Diligence, to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange
 “Doctrines, contrary to God's Word, &c.” See the Form and Manner of ordering *Priests*.
 promot

promote that union; which we shall assuredly find productive of the very best Effects?

1. For those of you, *my worthy Brethren*, who already are Members of these *Societies*, I cannot too much applaud your good intentions, or encourage your zeal. Go on in the useful undertaking, highly profitable to yourselves, very advantageous to others. Your own Rules are so excellent, that they entirely supersede any thing I might have to advance. But permit me, in this day of loose Discipline and wild Doctrine, to beseech you earnestly to take heed to yourselves, and to be especially careful of your Example. By a close and strict attachment to *parochial* Communion *, keep up the Unity of the Church, and be watchful, lest you imbibe any of those pernicious Doctrines to which the Church, whereof you are Members, is an utter Stranger. It hath been observed, many amongst *yourselves* have complained of it, that our Altars are ill frequented; and no marvel, when so many flock to receive the Blessed Sacrament from the hands of those, who have no right to administer it to *them*. If any thing were worthy of wonder, sure this is most so! And as an excuse, the blame is cast upon the *Clergy*, the constant Subject of Scandal and Reproach with many, who most loudly

* I have great pleasure in being able to produce a Passage full to my purpose, from an amiable and excellent Writer, with whom I shall always think it my happiness to agree; Dr. *Stanhope* I mean, who, in his advice to the *Religious Societies*, added as a Postscript to his Sermon, preached before them, in 1702, observes—"As I ought to commend the steadfastness you profess to the established Church, so must I take the liberty to put you in mind of the proper way of expressing it. Which is by all due deference to your respective Pastors. Not *having itching ears*, nor *heaping to yourselves Teachers*, (as the Apostle speaks) nor *holding men's persons in admiration*; but *keeping the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*, and waiting, with all humility, for the Blessing and Grace of God upon his own Ordinances, in a regular, constant, *parochial* Communion. Your disposition to this is in good degree expressed by the readiness you prescribe to be directed by the Minister of your own Parish, or one of his approving. And I can, from my own experience, testify the practice of such as I am concern'd to enquire into, to be agreeable to it. Be sure, hold fast this principle, and be not prevailed with to depart from it, upon any known, or supposed failures in your own, or any false notions of greater Edification from another Minister. For all this tends to loosen the Band of Union among Christians. An Union, which in the nature of the thing must be gradual, and therefore as national Churches make up the Church Universal; Diocesan the National; Parochial the Diocesan, so single persons must maintain this Union by constituting the Parochial. And be assured, that God is never more honoured, nor men more edified, than when they apply to him in the most perfect order and peace, and receive his Word and Sacraments, at the hands of those, to whom the Laws of his Church, and of the State conformable to these, have committed the trust of rightly and duly administering them to the Congregations respectively under their Charge."

The whole piece is equally useful and excellent; and I have the satisfaction to observe, that it is so well esteemed by the *Societies*, as to be printed on a Sheet, and hung up in the several Vestries where they meet, for constant and general inspection. The same observation is also made in p. 17, 18. of a Sermon preached by the learned Dr. *Berriman* before the Societies, in 1738-9.

talk of a loving, meek, and lowly Saviour's Gospel! Though I by no means take upon me to justify the Conduct of all the Clergy;—would to God they were *all* most strictly and exactly conscientious in the Discharge of their Duty; and, blessed be God, there are many such yet remaining amongst us! —Yet of this I am satisfied, that such a manner of proceeding is never likely to have any good Effects upon your Pastors; can serve only to irritate them more and more, and to set them still at a greater Distance from their Flocks.—Therefore, let me not doubt of a far different conduct from *you* of the *Societies*; and we trust, that by your exact, conscientious, and regular Discharge of your Duty, in your own Parish Churches, you will be very serviceable towards the support of that rational piety, of that amiable and serious Religion, which is the greatest Ornament and Dignity of human Nature.

It is obvious to every By-stander, how much the Harmony of their Music hath served the Cause of our modern *Separatists*; and it is lawful even to learn from an Enemy. Might not then an attention to this subject be well recommended to you? it seems likely to promote the interest of the Societies. For it is undeniable, that the Psalmody in the Church of England is not under the best regulations that might be: and it is much to be wished, that the very *loud* and *drawling* manner of our singing was more agreeably altered; which though, perhaps, not so easy to be generally † effected in our Churches, you may certainly effect in your several Societies.

At the same time, permit me to recommend a condescending and most gentle behaviour towards all young and weak members of your Societies: let not too morose or rigid an attachment to any particular and indifferent customs, much less a *disputatious* and overbearing behaviour deter young and sober persons from entering amongst you. Win them by all possible means, and after the Example of your Blessed Master, gently lead the feeble and the faint, and *carry the Lambs*, as it were, *in your Bosom*.

But above all things, I must be allowed to press upon you the strictest and most exact conformity to your own Rules. 'Tis fruitless to be Members of a religious Society, to profess certain principles, and a regard to a particular Church; and yet not shew forth a conduct more exemplary, or a Life more holy than others. The Unity of Christ's Body is then fearfully

† I say *generally*: because I have the pleasure to observe great Improvement in *Singing*, in many of our Parish Churches, especially in the *Metropolis*. As it is a matter much worth attention, I have good hopes to see still greater and more universal Improvement in this most delightful Branch of Christian Worship; and at a Time, when we have so many excellent *Masters* of *Music*, we may reasonably presume, that some of them will exert their abilities in this respect: nor amidst their endeavours for the public *amusement*, entirely neglect what may tend so much to the public *advantage*, and the service of religion.

broken by us ; when we disobey the Dictates, and live contrary to the Doctrines of that Divine Spirit, who is the bond of our Union with Christ our Head. And as the design of his most holy religion is to make us happy here, as well as hereafter ; is to diffuse comfort, peace, and joy wherever it is profest ; let it be our study, that it may attain this valuable End, by making us a blessing to our own families : where our Love, our Tenderness, our Zeal for Christ, where our holy and heavenly Tempers should first display themselves ; and which, from our families, should accompany us into the world ; discovering to men, by the uprightness and honesty, the strict justice and kind benevolence of our conduct, that our Religion is something more than Profession ; and that those principles must needs be good, which produce such commendable fruits.

Thus will you, above all other methods, recommend the religion of Christ, the Church of *England*, and your present Societies, which, I doubt not, you will diligently frequent : for to be Members of them, and not attend them at all convenient opportunities, is to support them feebly with one hand, and to pull them down violently with the other. You will be regular then in your attendance, and make them, as they are designed, eminent Means of your spiritual Improvement, and of promoting that Unity, which should be so dear to us all ; that so *your Light may shine before Men, and they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father, who is in Heaven.*

2: Those of you, *my Brethren*, of the younger sort especially, who *are not yet* Members of these religious Societies, and perhaps are Strangers to their Design and Utility, let me advise to inform yourselves well hereof, and to embrace the happy means, they afford, of Edification and Instruction. Young People, well disposed, are generally ensnared most easily by religious Delusions : and you live, *my young Friends and Brethren*, in an Age, where there is the greatest Danger from such Delusions. You cannot therefore be too much cautioned, or too well guarded against them.

The subtle Advocates for *Deism* and *Infidelity* abound every where : and their poisonous Books are but too generally spread and diffused. The reasoning and arguments in many of them are often too plausible and perplexed for the unskilful to discern their Deceit, or penetrate their Tendency ; and they have their Effect, but too frequently, in arresting unstable souls to their own perdition. On the other hand, the Patrons of *Enthusiasm* are, in appearance, so holy and zealous, and so abound in external Piety † ; and

C 2

Enthusiasm

† I would not by any means be understood to advance, that the *Patrons of Enthusiasm* are *not* what they *seem*, are Hypocrites, and mere Pretenders to Piety. God forbid, that I should even think this, or take upon me so to judge. For I am satisfied, from an exact Observation of the Nature of *Enthusiasm*, that the *mistaken Men*, over whom it hath Power, are frequently as sincere

Enthusiasm itself is of a Nature so infectious, that the well-inclined are presently caught with the specious shew, and the best minds, through their native simplicity, most easily drawn aside; in direct contradiction to the advice of St. Paul, which we read at the beginning, *Mark those that cause Divisions, and—not follow,—but avoid them.*

Now to escape the Evils both of *Deism* and *Enthusiasm*, as well as to promote a true, solid, and rational Improvement of your Souls in Holiness; to prevent the ill Effects arising from disunion, to promote all the good ones which follow from that Union, which is so necessary in the Body of Christ; Nothing will conduce more than an admission into these *Religious Societies*, where you will be instructed in all the branches of true practical religion, in the Doctrines of the Church of *England*, and in whatever tends to found Faith and real Godliness. You will there have an opportunity to propose any scruples, which may arise in your minds, and to gain the desired satisfaction from your doubts. You will there be secured, as much as human means can secure, in the right way to Life, and be preserved in that even path of piety, which is so honourable in the Eyes of all, which will be so peaceful and pleasant to yourselves.

For believe me, however Youth and high Spirits may render you averse to serious thinking, true Happiness is sought for in vain elsewhere; the giddy round of jovial pleasure, the merry madness of unthinking Delight, the intoxicating Draught of unlawful and forbidden Transports, are big with the keenest Sorrows, are speedily followed by the most bitter reflections. Human Nature can find in these no place whereon to rest its foot; and if you pursue these,—farewell the Hopes of solid Happiness. Undisguised Religion and pure Virtue, an awful Regard to your God and your Saviour, and a diligent Discharge of your Duty to Man, will alone procure peace at your latter End, and soften the pillow of Death; Peace, more abundant, the more early you set out in this path of pleasantness; to which these *Societies* will introduce you; and prove we have Hope, the blessed

sincere as they are zealous; Exceptions there are, doubtless, and that very many. But where *enthusiastic* principles have fully possessed the Mind, they operate much more forcibly, than the more cool and sober Determinations of Reason. The authority of the great Mr. *Locke* on this Head may be of much more weight than any sentiments of mine: and he, in his excellent Chapter on *Enthusiasm*, remarks, that “where it once gets footing, it works more powerfully on the persuasions and actions of men, than either Reason or Divine Revelation, or both together: Men being most forwardly obedient to the impulses they receive from themselves; and the whole Man is sure to act more vigorously, where the whole Man is carried by a natural motion. For strong Conceit, like a new principle, carries all easily with it, when got above common sense, and freed from all restraint of reason and check of reflection, it is heightened into a divine Authority, in concurrence with our own temper and inclination.” See the whole Chapter, *Essay on Understanding*, B. 4. C. 19.

occasions of ever preserving you in it. Thus alone can you honourably distinguish yourselves; for young Men have already run such Lengths, that you cannot expect to excel, be you never so heroic in Iniquity; it will be no difficult matter to outshine them in Virtue, and thus to obtain the most laudable Distinction.

Indeed, in this course, you must be prepared to meet with Enemies, and those of a very different sort: yet be not discouraged; but as forewarned, press on with greater alacrity.

The worldly and prophane, the voluptuous and luke-warm, displeased at a conduct which so eminently condemns their own, will, by mockery and reviling, labour, all they can, to discountenance and discourage you and to bring a reproach on your profession. They will say their worst, and the worst they think they have now to say, is, "*That you are a Methodist,*"

With respect to this Charge, though, it is to be feared, very frequently urged by those who are absolute Strangers to its purpose and import, yet it may be useful to observe, that if you really *are* attached to the *Methodists*, as I hope you are not; if you hear their Preachers; if you attend their Meetings; and approve their distinguishing Doctrines and Practices; then this can be no Calumny; for the Truth can never be a reproach. But, on the contrary, if you are, as I suppose, no *Hearer* or *Favourer* of them; neither attached to their party, nor inclined to their principles; but sound in your Faith, stedfast to your Church, regular and constant in your attendance upon it, careful in your observance of parochial Communion, sober, exemplary, and diligent in your Discharge of all moral and social Duties; then are you no *Methodist*, but a true Christian, on the sure foundation of the Gospel, and on the principles of the Church of *England*; and this Name may well be received with joy, as a mark of your true Christianity; and as thrown against you in contempt and reviling, *falsely*, and only on account of your more sober and exemplary conduct, you have reason to rejoice in it, and to apply your Saviour's words, *Blessed are ye, when Men shall revile you, and speak all manner of evil against you, falsely for my sake: rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in Heaven.*

But, however the worldly and lukewarm may stigmatize the more serious and regular Christians with the Name of *Methodists*, as a Name of the utmost reproach and infamy; yet you will find no cause to imagine yourselves such, from the treatment you must expect from this sort of people, if your conduct be agreeable to what we have recommended; if you be careful to preserve the Unity of the Church by such a Demeanour, by such a faith and practice, as we have shewn to be your bounden Duty and reasonable Service.

For so far from allowing you to be one of them, nay, or indeed even a Christian, these Men, of more Zeal than Knowledge, will call you a *Formalist*,

malist, "a mere formal Professor," and very freely pronounce you a stranger to *regenerating Grace*, with right hardy courage and without any fear. But let not this appellation shake your confidence, while it may lead you thus prudently to distinguish. If you are one of those who imagine that, because they go constantly to Church, and sometimes receive the Sacrament; can talk much in favour of the Liturgy of the Church of *England*, and are mighty in words for her excellent constitution; and therefore conclude that they are the only Churchmen, and rely, like the Papists, on the mere work done for Salvation; then are you a *Formalist* indeed, and have no reason to be offended on the application of a Term, which you so justly deserve, which is at once so alarming to yourselves, and so dishonourable to your profession. But on the other hand, if you are humble in heart, and lowly in mind; firm in your Faith, and blameless in your Life; sensible that you can do nothing without the Grace, that you are nothing without the Merits of Christ; and if, in this Spirit, you think yourself bound to keep up the Unity of the Church, whereof you are a Member, by duly attending its Sacraments and Services; and do not dare to run after every bold Man, who in any, in every place, takes upon him the uncommissioned Duty of preaching; if you are thus regular in your Life, and regular in your Devotion, never be moved at the formidable cry of "*Formalist*;" in which they *only* are concerned, but *they* much are concerned, who depend on their *forms*, and rely on their external services.

But if this reproach will not shake you, they have another at hand, and one most familiar in their Mouths. They will tell you—if you happen to have a little more prudence and caution, than to run the absurd Lengths they propose, and if you live soberly and quietly in the manner above described, they will tell you, that "you are afraid of Man; more afraid of Man than of God."

This, it must be owned, is a heavy charge, and one which it much concerns us to be well satisfied in our own conscience, that we are free from. There are two remarkable instances * of the Fear of Man mentioned in the Gospel; they will shew us well what that fear meaneth. *Nicodemus* is one, *who came to Jesus by night for fear of the Jews*. Many of the chief Rulers supply us with the other: who, though they believed on *Jesus*, had not courage to confess their Faith; *because*, we are told, *they loved the praise of Men more than the praise of God*. Now if you so fear the Displeasure, or

* That also of the *Parents* of the Blind Man mentioned, St. *John* ix. 22, 23. might be added.—The persons, who are so free with this charge will do well to recollect, that it was never the custom with their Divine Master to discourage the smallest beginnings of Grace; never his custom to quench the smouldering flax, or break the bruised reed. Fearful of Men as *Nicodemus* was, *even he* was accepted. Let this teach and commend a more gentle and forbearing Spirit.

love the Praise of Men, as to omit to own and confess Christ, where you may incur any Danger or Loss by so doing; then certainly you are highly blame-worthy; you stand guilty and adjudged of this heavy Charge. But if you are never backward or fearful, when any Necessity calls, to confess your faith in Christ crucified; and that at any hazard, willing rather to forfeit all things, than the approbation of your Lord, and the Testimony of a good Conscience; you are, without controversy, perfectly clear of this Censure, and have no cause to be affected by it.

It is frequently thrown out, by *Enthusiasts* of all Denominations, against those who do not come into their principles, and follow their practices; who have not so much ardour of passion, and so little bias of Judgment as themselves; and who do not think it a Duty to hold with them, as essential to Salvation, the practice or omission of some of the most ordinary and indifferent Things in Life. A contrariety hereto, and an avoiding or disapproving their ways, seldom fails to procure from them the heavy Imputation of the *Fear of Man*. But this is very little to be regarded by those, who at all reasonable times are ready to declare their faith; and who would rather give up their Life and their All, than the high and glorious hope of everlasting Life, through Jesus Christ.

At the same time we may observe, that such bold Censures, thrown out indiscriminately, are but sorry proofs of the goodness of the Cause, which they are designed to commend. For as they fully speak a proud and a haughty Spirit, as well as a very narrow one, which would confine all truth, knowledge, and piety, within the little bounds of a particular Sect or Society; so do they too plainly declare, that this Spirit is not of Christ. And verily there seems to me nothing, which so much and so clearly proves the Badness of the Cause of the Sectaries, as well as of the Espousers † of some other modern Notions, as that great and glaring want of Charity discernible amongst them; and that absurd and unchristian manner of confining all truth, sincerity, and faith within their own very limited pale.

These Considerations may serve to arm you against the Calumny of the Fear of Man; which some are used to deal out so liberally to those who do not chuse to run their Lengths of Riot, but after their Master's advice,

† It will easily be understood, that I refer here to the Notions of Mr. *Hutchinson*; of which I am bound to speak with the greater candour and moderation, as having once entertained a more favourable Opinion of them, than maturer Judgment, and more impartial Examination, suffer me at present to entertain. However, I would not by any means be understood to assert, that all the favourers of these Opinions are of the same Spirit with the first Author of them: since I have the pleasure to know several, of whose Abilities, Sincerity, and true Christianity, it would be criminal to admit a doubt; and who, I trust, by the Blessing of God, when riper Judgment, and more free Thought shall have removed their prejudices, may become as useful as they are amiable.

would

would wish to unite some of the *Wisdom of the Serpent* with the *Simplicity of the Dove*; either of which are as improper alone, as they are excellent when conjoin'd.

If these reproaches are found unavailing, and they perceive that your Life and Conduct can give no handle *for*, that your Lips utterly disclaim all attachment *to*, their opinions;--and whence besides, we should judge of men and their manners, I know not;---they will yet go one step farther, and declare, that "however for *worldly* Ends you may *dissemble*, you are notwithstanding one of them *in your Heart*; you are, in your real *Inclinations*, a "*Methodist*."

This, I trust, will never shake your confidence, but while you abhor and reject the infamous insinuation, from those, who presume to usurp the dread prerogative of God, who dare to judge the secrets of the Heart; it will make you more steadfast in your belief, and more zealous in your attachment to the Church of *England*.

Thus have I very briefly touched upon some of the common and trying Reproaches of the present Day, the better to establish you, my younger Brethren, in the Faith, and to forewarn you what you must expect, that you may be the better able to bear it. And let me conclude with observing, that whatever may be the Temper of the adversaries of our Church, her own hath always been distinguished for its moderation, candour, and forbearance. And let me intreat you ever to manifest yourselves her true Sons by the same amiable Disposition; however opposed or reviled, revile not by any means again; but only with meekness and wisdom shew the reasons of your Conduct and Carriage. But let me advise you, never attempt to reason or dispute with an *Enthusiast*; no good can ever come from it; for such persons have no intention to come over to your opinions: they only talk to *convert* and *save* you, as they are pleased to phrase it: and they have a short method of baffling every argument which may be urged either from reason or Scripture rightly understood, by telling you, that "they have "Eyes, and you have not; that they see, and you do not." * And if this be the case, how vain is it to reason with those who are endowed with another *Sense*, with a faculty of Knowledge and Discernment denied to you? Let it be your fixt rule never to attempt it; for religious Disputations, even at the best, are seldom productive of much advantage.--Yet never be backward to give a reason of the Hope that is in you, with meekness and fear, whenever it may be necessary †; not forwardly obtruding, or unseasonably pressing

* How far this agrees with what Mr. *Locke* has said of *Enthusiasm*, the Reader will see, by consulting to the *Chapter* in his *Essay* above quoted.

† Nothing will better enable you to do this, than a careful perusal of Dr. *Squire's* useful and excellent

sing religious subjects, where they may rather harm and offend, than profit. This is throwing Pearls before Swine. Christ's Religion consists more in silent activity, than in a noisy and obstreperous fluency of words. Speak especially by your Life and Conduct. And while desirous to preserve yourselves from any Delusions on the right hand or on the left, and to keep up the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace; labour to do so, not only by the soundness of your Faith, and the holiness of your Life, but by the Love of your Soul, and the benevolent Charity of your Disposition; *walking worthy of the Vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, and long-suffering, forbearing one another in Love.*

Nor ever forget, that as *Love* is the distinguishing characteristic of true Christianity, so no Institution supplies us with such motives to it. For all sincere believers are Members of one Body, united under one Head, Christ Jesus the Lord, by the bond of Life, the ever blessed Spirit, communicated by the same Sacraments, administered to us by Pastors, who derive their Commission from the same Authority. We all profess one solemn Faith, summed up in our Creeds; we are called to one Holiness and Purity; we have all one hope, and are all travelling to one home: we have all one God and Father; we are all made of one Blood; and being thus all Brethren, journeying one road, let us jointly remember *Joseph's* Advice, *See that ye fall not out by the Way.* To which end, let us as carefully avoid whatever may make a Separation in the Church, and break the Unity of the Body of Christ, as we would the most pernicious Poison*; let us avoid, as we would Death and Hell, whatever may give offence and scandal to our Brethren, and may tend to break the sweet Bond of Love; striving, to the utmost of our ability, to promote brotherly peace, unity, and concord; which will best be done by a *PURE FAITH*, by an *HOLY LIFE*, and by a *FOR-BEARING CHARITY*.

In which, that we may all abound, God, in great Mercy, grant; and to this End, let us unite in supplications to the throne of Grace, in the excellent words of our Church, which are well adapted to what hath gone be-

lent Work, lately published, entitled, "Indifference in Religion inexcusable; or, a serious, impartial, and practical Review of the Certainty, Importance, and Harmony of Religion, both natural and revealed——" where the learned Author has, with great Judgment and Elegance, collected together the Evidence in behalf of Natural and Revealed Religion.

* If we have been so unhappy as to have been guilty of this great Crime and Offence, and to have done any thing which may tend to destroy the Unity of the Church, the only method by which we can testify our true repentance, or make any amends to the public, is to return from the error of our ways, to retract, and unite ourselves again to the Body of Christ; and surely there is nothing in such a Conduct, which true Sense and real Virtue need be ashamed of; nothing which the sincere and ingenuous would not approve. No part of *St. Austin's* Works is read with more pleasure, or hath gained the Author more Esteem, than his Book of *Retractions*.

fore,—“ O God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our only Saviour,
 “ the Prince of Peace, give us Grace seriously to lay to heart the great
 “ Dangers we are in by our unhappy Divisions; take away all hatred and
 “ prejudice, and whatsoever else may hinder us from godly Union and
 “ Concord. That as there is but one Body and one Spirit, and one Hope
 “ of our Calling; one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father
 “ of us all; so we may henceforth be all of one Heart, and of one Soul,
 “ united in one holy Bond of Truth and Peace, of Faith and Charity,
 “ and may, with one Mind, and one Mouth, glorify Thee, through Jesus
 “ Christ our Lord. *Amen.*”



A P P E N D I X.

I.

THOSE who are desirous of full information respecting the *Religious Societies*, their rise and progress, design and use, may meet with Satisfaction in Dr. Woodward's Account of them. But as they are not so universally known as their Merit deserves, it hath been thought proper to employ a page or two at the Close of this Sermon, that the Reader may be no stranger to their original intent, their general Rules and Orders, and their several Places of Meeting.

For the first we shall only transcribe the Words of Bishop Burnet, from the third Volume of the History of his own Times, p. 438, 439. "In King James's Reign the fear of Popery was so strong, as well as so just, that many, in and about London, began to meet often together, both for Devotion and for their further Instruction: things of that kind had been formerly practised only among the Puritans and the Dissenters. But these were of the Church, and came to their Ministers, to be assisted with Forms of Prayer and other Directions. They were chiefly conducted by Dr. Beveridge and Dr. Horneck. Some disliked this, and were afraid it might be the Original of new Factions and Parties; but wiser and better men thought it was not fit nor decent to check a Spirit of Devotion at such a time; it might have given scandal, and it seemed a discouraging of piety, and might be a means to drive well-meaning persons over to the Dissenters. After the Revolution, the Societies grew more numerous, and for a greater encouragement to Devotion, they got such Collections to be made, as maintained many Clergymen to read Prayers in so many places, and at so many different hours, that devout persons might have that comfort at every hour of the day. There were constant Sacraments every Lord's Day in many Churches. There were both great numbers, and greater appearances of Devotion at Prayers and Sacraments, than had been observed in the memory of Man. These Societies resolved to inform the Magistrates of Swearers, Drunkards, Profaners of the Lord's Day, and of lewd Houses, and they threw in the part of the Fine, given by Law to Informers, into a stock of Charity. From this they were called Societies of Reformation; some good Magistrates encouraged them, but others treated them roughly. As soon as Queen Mary heard of this, she did, by her Letters and Proclamations, encourage these good Designs, which were afterwards prosecuted by the late King. Other Societies set themselves to raise Charity-Schools, for teaching poor Children, for cloathing them, and binding them out to Trades. Many Books were printed, and sent over the nation by them, to be freely distributed: these were called Societies for propagating Christian Knowledge. By this means some thousands of children are well educated and carefully looked after. In many places of the Nation, the Clergy met often together, to confer about matters of Religion and Learning; and they got Libraries to be raised for their common use. At last a Corporation was created by the late King *, for propagating the Gospel among Infidels, for settling Schools in our Plantations, for furnishing the Clergy that were sent thither, and for sending Missionaries among such of our plantations, as were not able to provide Pastors for themselves. It was a glorious Conclusion of a Reign, that was begun with preserving our Religion, thus to create a Corporation for propagating it to the remotest parts of the Earth, and among Infidels. There were very liberal Subscriptions made to it by many of the Bishops and Clergy, who set about it with great care and zeal: upon the Queen's Accession to the Crown, they had all possible assurances of her favour and protection, of which, upon every application, they received very eminent marks."

It must be remarked here, that the Bishop speaks of all the Societies in general, which were established at that Time. But it is necessary to distinguish the present *Religious Societies* from those

* King William.

those which were called *Societies for Reformation of Manners*; with which the *Religious Societies*, as such, have never interfered, though they have been often confounded with them.

The great and good Mr. *Nelson* was a zealous friend to the *Religious Societies*; and, as his testimony must be regarded, we shall subjoin what he saith of them in the Preface to his excellent Book on the *Feast and Fasts*, &c. “ Upon this occasion I think it a great piece of justice to acknowledge and commend the *pious and devout* Practices of the *Religious Societies*, who in this point, as well as in many others, distinguish themselves by their regular conformity and obedience to the laws of the Church; for they constantly attend the public Assemblies upon such holy Seasons. And till they can communicate regularly in their own Parish Churches upon such Days, they embrace those opportunities that are provided; there being two † Churches in *London* employed for that purpose; where they as duly receive the Blessed Sacrament upon all Festivals, as they perform all other acts of public worship. How they spend the Vigils in preparing their minds for a due celebration of the ensuing Solemnity, is more private, but not less commendable. And the care they take to suppress the dawnings of *Enthusiasm*, and to discountenance the first appearances of any *vicious* practices amongst their Members, and the method they impose before their Delinquents are entirely reconciled or totally rejected, is such a preparation of the minds of the *Laity* for the reception of that *Discipline* that is wanted in the Church, that if ever we are blessed with what good men wish for, and bad men fear, these *Religious Societies* will be very instrumental in introducing it, by that happy regulation that prevails among them. And while they pay that deference they profess to their *Parochial Ministers*, and are ready to be governed by their Directions, and are willing to submit their Rules and Orders to the judgment of the *reverend* Clergy; I cannot apprehend but that they must be very serviceable to the Interest of Religion, and may contribute very much to revive that true Spirit of Christianity, which was so much the glory of the primitive times. And I see no reason why men may not meet and consult together, to improve one another in Christian Knowledge, and, by mutual advice, take measures how best to farther their own Salvation, as well as to promote that of their Neighbours; when the same liberty is taken for the improvement of trade, and for carrying on the diversions and pleasures of life. And if, at such Meetings, they shall voluntarily subscribe any certain Sums, to be disposed in any such Charities, as shall seem most proper to the majority of their Members, I cannot imagine how this can deserve censure, when the liberal Contributions of *Gentlemen*, to support a *Horse-race*, or a *Musick meeting*, have never been taxed with the least *Illegality*.”

† *St. Mary Le Bow*, and *St. Dunstan's* in the West.

II. The General Rules and Orders of the Religious Societies:

The sole design of these Societies being to promote real Holiness of Heart and Life, it is absolutely necessary, that the Persons who enter into them, do seriously resolve (by the Grace of God) to apply themselves to all means proper to accomplish these blessed ends; trusting in the Divine Power, and gracious conduct of the Holy Spirit, through our Lord Jesus Christ, to excite, advance, and perfect all good in them: And, in order to their being of one heart and one mind in this design, every Member of these Societies shall own and manifest himself to be of the Episcopal Church of England, as by Law established; shall frequent the Liturgy, and other public exercises of the same; shall be careful withal, to express due Christian Charity to all men; and shall moreover duly keep and observe the Articles following.

I. **T**HAT these Societies shall meet every Sabbath Day at a convenient place, at five o'clock in the evening, to encourage each other in practical Holiness, by discoursing on spiritual subjects, observing the holy Scriptures as their rule, and praying to God for his Grace and Blessing.

II. That at such meetings, there be no disputes about controversial points, or unnecessary discourse about State Affairs, or the concerns of trade and worldly things; but that the whole drift of their Christian Conference be, to glorify God, and edify one another in Love.

III. That, for the mutual encouragement of Love and Unity, and peaceable submission to our Governors, each person belonging to these Societies shall acknowledge himself well affected to his Majesty King *GEORGE*, and our Constitution both in Church and State.

IV. That each one in his order (even of the meanest capacity, shall have the freedom of mentioning his thoughts, and expressing his doubts, upon any discourse, without being censured by the rest, for the meanness of his expression, provided it be done with Modesty.

IV. That nothing be done in these Societies through strife, or vain-glory, but, in humbleness of mind, let every one think another better than himself.

VI. That every Member of these Societies shall use their utmost endeavours to enlarge these Societies with suitable Members, and Subscribers to the Sacrament and Prayers.

VII. That every Member at entrance pay and contribute [] towards a public stock, for pious and charitable uses, and defraying the charge of the Societies meetings: and the money thus collected, shall be kept by the Stewards of these Societies for the time being; whom, with two Assistants, shall be chosen by the majority of voices twice a year; at which times, eight Members, in their turns as they stand upon the List, shall be appointed, with the Stewards and Assistants, to form a Committee, and shall have the power of disposing of the money collected for the uses above-mentioned: and the said Stewards shall keep a faithful Register of what is collected and distributed, to be perused by any Member of these Societies at his request.

VIII. That any Member of these Societies may recommend any Object of Charity to the Stewards, who shall (with the Consent of the majority of the Committee) give out of the common stock, as occasion requires. And in a case of extraordinary necessity, every particular Member shall be desired to contribute farther, as he shall think fit.

IX. That every Member who absents himself four times together, without giving a satisfactory account to the Stewards, shall be looked upon as disaffected to the Society.

X. That none shall be admitted into these Societies, without giving Notice thereof to the Stewards, who shall acquaint the whole Society therewith: and, after enquiry into their religious purposes, and manner of life, the Stewards may admit them, if the major part of the Society shall allow of it. And, with the like consent, they may exclude any Member proved guilty of any misbehaviour, after due admonition, unless he gives sufficient testimony of his repentance and amendment, before the whole Society.

XI. It is recommended to every Member of these Societies, to consider the dangerous snares of gaming, and the open scandal of being concerned in those games which are used in public houses;

houses; and that it is the safest and most commendable way to decline them, by shunning, as much as possible, all resort to such houses and taverns, and wholly to avoid play-houses.

XII. Whereas the following Duties have been too much neglected, to the scandal and reproach of our most holy Religion, all the Members of these Societies shall resolve, by the Grace of God, to make it their serious endeavours, 1. To be just in all their dealings, even to an exemplary strictness. As, Matt. v. 16, 20. *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.—I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* Chap. vii. 12. *Therefore all things, whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the Law, and the Prophets.*

2. To pray many times a day; remembering our continual dependance upon God, both for spiritual and temporal things. 1 Thess. v. 17. *Pray without ceasing.*

3. To partake of the Lord's Supper at least once a month, if not prevented by a reasonable impediment. 1 Cor. xi. 26. *For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.* Luke xxii. 19. *This do in remembrance of Me.*

4. To practise the profoundest Meekness and Humility. Matt. xi. 29. *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*

5. To watch against censuring others. Matt. vii. 1. *Judge not, that ye be not judged.*

6. To accustom themselves to holy thoughts in all places. Psal. cxxxix. 1, 2. *O Lord, thou hast searched me out and known me: thou knowest my down-sitting, and mine up rising, thou understandest my thoughts long before. Thou art about my path, and about my bed: and spiest out all my ways.*

7. To be helpful one to another. 1 Cor. xii. 25. *That there should be no Schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.*

8. To exercise Tendernefs, Patience, and Compassion towards all men. Tit. iii. 2. *To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.*

9. To make reflections on themselves when they read the Holy Bible, or other good books, and when they hear sermons. 1 Cor. x. 11. *Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.*

10. To shun all foreseen occasions of evil; as evil company, known temptations, &c. 1 Thess. v. 22. *Abstain from all appearance of evil.*

11. To think often on the different estates of the glorified and the damned in the unchangeable eternity, to which we are hastening. Luke xvi. 25. *But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.*

12. To examine themselves every night, what good or evil they have done in the day past. 2 Cor. xiii. 5. *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates.*

13. To keep a private fast once a month, (especially near their approach to the Lord's Table) if at their own disposal; or to fast from some meal when they can conveniently. Matt. vi. 16. *Moreover, when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily, I say unto you they have their reward. Luke v. 35. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.*

14. To mortify the Flesh with its Affections and Lusts. Gal. v. 19, 24. *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, Adultery, Fornication, Uncleannefs, Lasciviousnefs, Idolatry, Witchcraft, Hatred, Variance, Emulations, Wrath, Strife, Seditions, Heresies, Envyings, Murders, Drunkennefs, Revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.*

15. To advance in Heavenly-mindedness, and in all Grace. 1 Pet. iii. 8. *Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing.*

16. To

16. To shun spiritual pride, and the effects of it ; as Railing, Anger, Peevishness, Impatience of Contradiction, &c.

17. To pray for the whole Societies in their private prayers. James. v. 16. — *Pray one for another.*

18. To read pious books often for their edification.

19. To be continually mindful of the great obligation of this special profession of Religion, and to walk so circumspectly, that none may be offended or discouraged from it by what they see in them, nor occasion be given to any to speak reproachfully of it.

20. To shun all manner of affectation and moroseness, and to be of a civil and obliging deportment to all men.

XIII. That each Member shall encourage the Catechising of young and ignorant people in their respective families, according to their stations and abilities ; and shall observe all manner of Religious and Family Duties.

XIV. That these Orders shall be read over at least four times in a year, by one of the Stewards for the time being, and also at the admittance of any new Member ; and that with such deliberation, that each Member may have time to examine himself by them, or to speak his Mind in any thing relating to them.

XV. That in the time of Sickness of any Member in these Societies, the other Members take all convenient opportunities of visiting such sick Member.

XVI. That at the Death of any Member of these Societies, a Funeral Sermon be preached, at the Charge of the Societies.

XVII. That every Member enter (in a Book, kept for that purpose) his Name and Place of Abode ; and in case of Removal, do inform the Stewards of the same, that the said Removal may be entered.

XVIII. That every Member of these Societies shall (after mature deliberation, and due trial) subscribe his Name to these orders, to express his approbation of them, and his resolution to endeavour to live up to them ; in order to which, he shall constantly keep a Copy of them by him.

XIX. That at every Election for new Stewards, each Member shall have a free Vote. The old Stewards shall put up four, and the Members shall chuse two ; and nothing shall be done relating to the affairs of these Societies, till it hath been agreed upon by a majority of these Societies, and of the Minister who is President.

XX. Lastly, That no alterations or additions be made to these Orders, without the consent of some pious and learned Divine of the Church of *England*, especially of the Minister who is chosen President.

III.

A List of the Religious Societies.	The Places of their Meeting.	The Pious and Charitable Undertakings, &c.
1. St. John's, Southwark.	In the Vestry.	
2. Lambeth Society.	At Mr. Williams's in Lambeth-Butts, where they have met upwards of forty years.	A Sacrament every Sunday, the first in the month, and festivals excepted, at seven in the morning in Summer, and half an hour after seven in the Winter, at Lambeth Church.
3. College Chapel.	In Denham's-Place.	
4. St. Olave's, Southwark.	In the Vestry.	
5. White-Chapel.	In the Vestry.	
6. St. John's, Wapping.	In the Vestry.	
7. St. Michael's, Crooked-Lane.	In the Vestry.	A Sacrament every Sunday morning, the first in the month and festivals excepted, at six in Summer and seven in Winter. Also prayers every working day at eight in the Evening (except Thursdays) when there is a Lecture; Service begins at six in Winter, and half an hour after six in Summer.
8. St. Michael Royal on College-Hill.	In the Vestry.	A Lecture and Sacrament every Sunday, Christmas-Day, and Good-Friday, at St. Alban's, Wood-street, at half an hour after five in the morning.
9. St. Michael's, Bassishaw.	In the Vestry.	A Lecture at six in the evening, every Friday at St. Alphage, near Sion Colledge, by London-Wall, also twenty Boys and six Girls educated and clothed.
10. St. Sepulchre's.	In the Vestry.	
11. St. Bride's.	In the Vestry.	
12. St. Ann's.	At Mr. Brown's in King-street, Soho.	
13. St. James's.	In Berwick-street, Chapel-Vestry.	
14. The Savoy.	In the Vestry.	

A Sacrament at Bow-Church, in Cheap-side, every Festival, and on Good-Friday, at Eight in the Morning. The Plate used on which Occasions was given by Robert Nelson, Esq; to the Religious Societies.

This Account was given by the Stewards.